

ORAL STATEMENT

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE**

**The Committee on Public Works and the Environment
Carol Schwartz, Chair**

April 12, 2006

**Steven R. Hirsh
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Good morning Councilmember Schwartz and members of the Committee. I am Steven Hirsh; I am a Senior Remedial Project Manager with the Environmental Protection Agency, assigned to the Spring Valley cleanup. I worked with this project from 1993 until 1995, and returned to it in the fall of 2002. Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this Roundtable. I would like to provide an update from EPA's perspective on the work accomplished at the site since the last Hearing in 2004, and address current issues which may be of concern to Council, including the status of our groundwater investigation. Also with me today from EPA Region III are Hank Sokolowski, Associate Director of the Hazardous Site Cleanup Division, Rick Rogers, Chief of the Drinking Water Branch, and Stephanie Branche-Wilson of EPA's Office of Communications and Government Relations.

EPA, DC Health and the Corps continue to work together as Partners in the Spring Valley cleanup. EPA believes that the Partnership continues to function effectively, with each Partner's organization maintaining its respective role and mission, and that the cleanup and the community benefit from this arrangement.

The investigation and cleanup work at the Spring Valley site is moving ahead. There are many tasks to be completed. The Partners have developed their priorities, with community and other stakeholder input. We frequently review those priorities and make adjustments based on new information or stakeholder needs. As we have discussed in the past, the Partners agree that work needs to go forward concurrently on the chemical contamination as well as the other issues associated with the use of munitions at the site.

The principal chemical of concern in soils at Spring Valley remains residual arsenic contamination. The Partners' work on this issue involves removal of arsenic-contaminated soil from residential and non-residential properties. Work is complete at approximately 1/3 of the properties that will need soil removal. The Corps and its contractors are doing a very good job working with the affected homeowners. The property owners are involved in all aspects of work planning and restoration of the property after the work

is done. EPA has received many compliments about the work done by the Army under the arsenic removal program.

Associated with the arsenic soil removal program is issuance of ‘Comfort Letters.’ A ‘Comfort Letter’ is a letter signed by the EPA and the District of Columbia Department of Health which explains to the homeowner(s) that all necessary soil removal actions have been completed on their property. This letter is important to homeowners, particularly when real estate transactions occur. EPA and DC have developed several model ‘Comfort Letters’ which can be tailored to different factual situations. The Partners have given priority to getting ‘Comfort Letters’ to homeowners as soon as possible after the work on their properties is complete. We have developed mechanisms to track the progress of documentation and to help ensure timely issuance of the ‘Comfort Letter’ at remediated properties.

The Corps, with support from EPA and DC Department of Health, has been conducting pilot studies to determine if Phytoremediation, which is a process where the arsenic in soil is accumulated in ferns, is a viable option for remediation of some properties. We have been encouraged by the data collected during the Pilot Study. It is clear that arsenic in soil in Spring

Valley can be removed to some extent by growing ferns in the soil, followed by offsite disposal of the plants. We are now working with community members and other stakeholders to develop sampling protocols which we can use to measure the effectiveness of phytoremediation . This type of analysis has not been done at any similar site. If we are successful we may be able to offer some homeowners the use of Phytoremediation as a remedial option by late 2006. EPA expects that phytoremediation will only be considered in circumstances where excavation is not appropriate, and then only with the homeowners' approval.

As the Corps has previously testified, it has completed removal of debris from the Lot 18 worksite located on American University property. We are now evaluating soil sampling data and are working with the Partners and other Stakeholders to determine how much additional soil must be removed in order to complete removal actions at Lot 18. It is expected that the remaining contaminated soil will be removed and site restoration will begin within the next few months. Completion of removal actions at the Lot 18 site is a major milestone in the Spring Valley Cleanup.

The Council has expressed specific interest in the groundwater study. In 2005 we began the fieldwork associated with a multi-year groundwater study in the Spring Valley neighborhood. As part of this effort the Corps installed twenty nine groundwater monitoring wells. The purpose of these wells was twofold; first to identify any chemicals in groundwater near the Dalecarlia Reservoir; and second, to begin the task of defining the nature and extent of any contamination of the groundwater in Spring Valley. The work in 2005 has identified two areas where perchlorate was detected in the groundwater – one near Glenbrook Road, and the other south east of the Dalecarlia Reservoir. Additionally, arsenic was detected in groundwater at one location, near Glenbrook Road, at elevated levels. It is not yet known if there two areas where perchlorate was detected are related to each other, nor the source of the perchlorate. Since no one drinks groundwater, consumption of the contaminated groundwater does not present a current risk. However, there may be other ways people could come in contact with groundwater, such as during construction activities, or in sumps. EPA believes that such pathways, if any, will not present an unacceptable risk. The Partners will evaluate possible threats from such other groundwater pathways. A primary objective of the groundwater study has been and will

continue to b to determine the nature and extent of any perchlorate contamination in groundwater at Spring Valley.

In the next six months the Corps will install several additional monitoring wells. We will resample all the wells; newly installed and existing, and continue monitoring the elevation of the groundwater which will help us understand how the groundwater flows in Spring Valley and in the area close to the Dalecarlia Reservoir. Additional work is being conducted to examine the relationship between the groundwater and the water in the Reservoir.

The second major area of investigation is munitions response. Components of munitions response include geophysical investigations to locate buried objects and subsequent removal of objects where necessary. Most of the geophysical investigations and intrusive investigations this year were associated with Lot 18 and nearby properties. Last year many other residential properties were investigated. The Partners have agreed on a list of properties to be geophysically investigated next year. There are many factors that go into the selection process for geophysical investigation and subsequent intrusive investigations. The Partners have a selection process

and in all cases consensus is reached on the list of properties prior to investigation.

We are in the early stages of discussing when planned geophysical investigations for munitions will be finished. The location and number of properties to be investigated is derived from the Partners' ongoing analyses of points of interest associated with munitions activities. At some point in the future geophysical surveys and intrusive investigations will be completed. Of course the Partners will always be responsive to any issues of concern that may arise in the future.

Some current and former residents of Spring Valley have raised concerns regarding their health, and whether there is any association with the Spring Valley Site. EPA takes these concerns seriously, and they been and will continue to be considered by the Partners and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). ATSDR works closely with the DC Department of Health. In September, 2005 the ATSDR released its Spring Valley Health Consultation. In that document ATSDR recommended additional environmental sampling in Spring Valley, including specifically surface soil, soil gas, and groundwater, in several specific locations. We are

incorporating the ATSDR sampling recommendations into our ongoing investigations. We will continue to provide the Health Agencies the information they require to perform their evaluation of health issues in current and former Spring Valley residents.

In closing, EPA believes that the Spring Valley cleanup is progressing in a positive manner. Community and stakeholder concerns are heard and are being addressed. The Partners are carrying out their duties to protect human health and the environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Committee.
I would be happy to answer any questions.